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ENGLAND'S GREATEST VICEROY

AN APPRECIATION OF EVELYN BARING, FIRST EARL CROMER

The visitor at 36 Wimpole Street, London, on the morning of February twenty-sixth, 1916, would have found in his well-filled library a man of average height, slight but well put together, with white hair, sparse on the crown and well trimmed at the back and sides, a closely cropped white moustache, high forehead and prominent nose, and eyes which seem tired at one moment, yet at another bright with almost juvenescent warmth. This was Lord Cromer, awakened upon his seventy-fifth birthday, though it would have been too much to assume that he was celebrating it, for he is not one to celebrate anything connected with himself. At very most, all he would have indulged in would be a brief pause at the milestone, as he worked on an essay, indited a letter, read a favorite book, or possibly with bent head and half-closed eyes, thought of Egypt,—of affectionate memories left behind among its native people, or perhaps even of an alien hand uplifted to threaten the peace and new-born dignity of the land he has reclaimed.

The face is not an old face, though deeply lined, and the mouth, where mobility and firmness meet, is strongly reminiscent of Beethoven's. For the rest he resembles, somewhat, an aristocratic, kindly Southern gentleman of the Colonel Carter of Cartersville type.

It is no idle thought, that of Beethoven, when one thinks of what this greatest of proconsuls has accomplished, for there must be music of some sort, as well as strength, in the soul of a man who can maintain within himself in perfect harmony the five divergent types of soldier, statesman, financier, *lettré*, and man of the world. Among the great of history it would be difficult to name many who have been so versatile. The most have exhibited power and adaptation solely in the line in which they have become celebrated. Gladstone was writer as well as statesman, of course, but his prejudices and austerity forbid that he be proclaimed as possessing an elastic intellectuality. Frederick the

Great was an eminent soldier, and between battles he wrote poetry—at which Voltaire laughed heartily. Here is a man, trained as a soldier, who once on a time (and in a single morning!) was asked to give his verdict on a proposed economy in the Budget, on the dismissal of a postman, on a plan for increasing the army, on a quarrel between two rival Jewish sects, on the deportation of a drunken Irishman, on a question of precedence between the wives of two Egyptian officials, and on the best method of preserving the remains of a Ptolemaic temple,—and all these oddly diversified tasks were performed with as masterly a precision as with kind forbearance. The Consul General, too, found time at the beginning of each day to gather inspiration from Isaiah or Job, from Homer or Juvenal, and at its close to pursue in his study such lettered labors as enabled him to give the world his delightful *Paraphrases and Translations from the Greek*.

The poetic instinct had much to do with the affection and service Lord Cromer obtained from his subordinates and the confidence with which he animated the childlike Oriental in working out a process of national assimilation. It colored that frankness and honesty with which he treated all and which inspired frankness and honesty in return. Taciturn the man may have been at times, brusque of manner now and then, but these were only thin crusts on the surface of a generous and genial nature.

The Cromer personality can hardly be fully estimated without somewhat reviewing the conditions preceding the entrance of England into Egypt and those existing when, ten years ago, this her greatest Agent left there. The Turkish empire never did aught but enervate and destroy all individual energy and initiative in every country over which it has had control, and Egypt is no exception to the rule. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Mehemet Ali, but little removed from the fifth century "Scourge of God," Attila, was the chosen representative of the Sultan. He fostered industry and production, it is true, but did so by the courbash and ground it out of slaves rather than inciting it from free agents. Passing over his immediate successors there followed Ismail, the first Khedive, who governed from 1863 until deposed by the Sultan in '79, and who by wild extravagance

and continued oppression of the people first brought France and England into the country. This was in the mid-seventies, when both States were much concerned in the well-being of the Nile Valley because of their financial interests not only in the Suez Canal, but in the national debt as well. When Evelyn Baring came into her story as Consul General, Egypt, economically and politically, with liabilities increased in thirteen years from three million sterling to one hundred million, presented a prospect of ruin stretching to the horizon. And how he got there is worth tracing.

He was very much of a younger son, being the tenth child in a family sprung from the great bankers. Destined for the army, he attended the Ordinance School at Carshalton, went through the Royal Military Academy course at Woolwich, and then, when seventeen, entered the Royal Artillery. Three years later he was at Malta, aide-de-camp to Sir Henry Storke, then governor of the Ionian Islands, and truly the boy was father of the man, to judge from a little story told of those early days. At one of the official receptions a lady guest said to Sir Henry, "That young officer over there would really be a charming chap if only he had something to say for himself. He's so terribly quiet. Who is he, please?" The young officer has grown white now, but he is nearly as quiet in 1916 as in 1861. Had he been old enough to have served under the Duke of Wellington he would have been just the fellow faithfully to have lived out the doughty old warrior's terse axiom: "Say what you have to say, don't quote Latin, and sit down."

A captain in 1870, a major in 1877, Evelyn Baring first went into the Orient a year later, serving as private secretary to the Earl of Northbrook, then Viceroy of India. From this post he was shifted across to Egypt as the English member of the Public Debt Commission, then making an examination into the finances of the country in behalf of the European Powers, and it was noted soon that, though keeping himself in the background, he was the predominant factor in the body. When, eighteen months later, the government at Cairo became to all intents vested in the hands of France and England, Major Baring was named

the English Controller, his colleague being M. de Blignières—and again, in his tactful way, the Briton demonstrated marked resourcefulness: he it was, rather than the Frenchman, who pulled the strings.

This needed preface to the later life-work which the Nile Valley was to offer Baring was brief. In 1889, he was named Financial Member of the Council of India, and returned to Calcutta, where, for three years, he filled a difficult post with so bold an initiative and skilfulness as to awaken Downing Street to what sort of man he was. During this sojourn he inaugurated a policy so stamped by business capacity and statesmanlike acumen that it has been followed by all his successors. His three Indian budgets are still pointed to as the most successful ever presented.

Meanwhile events were happening in Egypt, where Tewfik Pasha, a weak though honest man, had succeeded his father, Ismail. Arabi Bey, a mutinous Colonel in the army, guided solely by personal ambitions, had promoted a formidable rebellion and in the Soudan the Mahdist insurrection was fast tearing that vast territory from the Khedive, who was powerless to cope with either catastrophe. England, by reason of the treaty of Berlin, was loath to meddle too much with Egyptian affairs and so complicate her status at Constantinople. The French Premier, Gambetta, was eager to intervene, but at this critical moment he fell from power, and the new Premier, de Freycinet (recently seated again in the Cabinet), absolutely refused to have anything to do with the situation, France formally retiring from the country. Thus England, whether she wished it or not, was left to deal alone with the dangerous conditions. As to the Soudan, it was wisely decided to let it go for the time being, but the complications in Egypt proper were gripped firmly by Great Britain, and the battle of Tel el Keber ended the revolt and established her as sole protectorate power. In passing, it may be added that her right to be there in that light was subsequently confirmed by the London Convention of 1885 and the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904. Turkey's present-day support of the Teutonic Powers has meant the final cancellation of Turkish suzerainty: December 18, 1914.

Thus, in 1883, it came to pass that his country turned to Major Baring to help her in solving the intricate problems, financial and political, the burden of which rested entirely upon her shoulders. England was an interloper in Egypt, in a double sense, since the latter was not an independent state but an appendage of Turkey. As Lord Cromer himself puts it, in his *Modern Egypt*: "One alien race, the English, have had to control and guide a second alien race, the Turks, by whom they are disliked, in the government of a third race, the Egyptians." To further aggravate conditions, the population was, and is, far from homogeneous. Lord Milner, himself experienced in Egyptian affairs, and an oriental student of distinction, declaring that "the stars were indeed gracious" which inducted Major Baring into his new office, has drawn this picture of the land in that day:—

Imagine a people, the most docile and good tempered in the world, in the grip of a religion the most intolerant and fanatical. Imagine this people and their faith, congenial in nothing but their conservatism, flung into the maelstrom of European restlessness and innovation. Imagine a country full of turbulent foreigners, whom its police cannot arrest save when caught *in flagrante delicto*, and whom its courts cannot try except for the most insignificant offenses. Imagine the government of this country unable to legislate for these foreigners without the consent of a dozen 'Powers,' most of them indifferent and some of them ill-disposed. Imagine it carrying on business in a foreign tongue, which is yet not the tongue of the predominant foreign race. Imagine it struggling to meet the clamorous needs of to-day with a budget rigorously fixed according to the minimum requirements of the day-before-yesterday.

There were some far-sighted men who declared that the right man had been chosen to bring order out of chaos, but others there were who feared his "autocratic and commanding manner." One of these wrote a verse on the subject and sent it to *The Times*:—

The virtue of patience is known;
But I think were one put to the touch,
The people of Egypt will own with a groan
There's evil in Baring too much.

No greater mistake could have been made. Baring knew how to wait without losing time, too, when it would be inopportune to

push any of his projects. From the first, he sought to obtain the confidence of these people by trying to understand them. He knew well how impossible it would be to rule by cutting away, at the outstart, all their prejudices, customs, and habits, so he made a certain sympathy with those prejudices, customs, and habits act as a conduit to convey into their minds a firmer code of morality and a higher standard of ambition. He understood not merely what they wanted, but the process of thought they employed in arriving at a recognition of those wants. His object was to fulfill their needs in a way that would be satisfactory to an Oriental, which is a far different thing from the way that would be satisfactory to a European. By this method, the new-comer forged a strong tie between governor and governed, and especially did the poor look up to him both as teacher and protector. As an instance of this, once a young medical man, engaged on what was known as cholera duty in some of the remote villages of the Delta, ordered a certain well emptied and cleaned. The woman to whom it belonged objected strongly, and, finally, as a last shot shouted "It shall be told the man Krahmer!"

In a word, the government instituted was a strict but benevolent paternalism. By that indefinable something in him which denotes the habit and capacity to command, coupled with hard common sense, Sir Evelyn Baring, as he had then become, shaped out of disorganization a strongly centralized control, and for a quarter of a century maintained it. Furthermore, when he came home in 1907, England could point to a foundation and superstructure so sure that no other man in time to come need seek to improve upon the work of this great architect of empire.

Where, in 1883, Egyptian four per cents were quoted at forty-five or under, three per cents were then rated considerably over par. Land which was difficult to sell then at eighty dollars an acre is now worth anywhere from a thousand dollars up. Property rights are fully recognized. A capable native police has been created. Justice is no longer bought and sold. Education has become a fixed fact. Forced labor, of the Mehemet Ali sort, has been abolished. Taxation has been reduced sixty per cent, yet native industries have been encouraged to such a degree that the

1913 budget, with debit charges of more than seventy-five millions of dollars, showed a credit balance of some two hundred thousand dollars. A system of irrigation has been established which is a model for the world. The fellah who used to live in rags now travels first class on railways not thought of prior to Cromer's time. As the peasant has been elevated from serf to the dignity of manhood, so has the Pasha been held to strict accountability and taught his limitations. Finally, it was due to the Baring administration that the Soudan, lost to Egypt in the eighties, was restored as a result of the battle of Omdurman, fought and won by Kitchener in 1898.

Neither in yesterday's history nor in the records of the world of to-day can be found another such transformation. Clive and Hastings established English supremacy in India, but did it by guns and perfidy, and the work required much doing over before it became stable. On the other hand, on the eve of leaving Cairo, Cromer embodied in a speech these three sentences: "I had better explain what my policy here has been. It may be summed up in a very few words. It has been to tell the truth." Again, Clive and Hastings took for themselves millions of dollars out of India, while this great modern viceroy found the fullest compensation in the realization that he was making Egypt over new, and was satisfied, even, to pay out of a moderate salary moneys that were needed in the process. It cannot be said of either Clive or Hastings in relation to India that which was so often and truly said of Cromer in relation to the Nile Valley: "Cromer is Egypt; Egypt is Cromer."

When this man stepped off the train at Victoria Station, London, there were waiting to do him honor, on behalf of old England, the son and brother of the king and all the Cabinet of the day, and amid handshakes of hearty good will he learned that Parliament had voted him the freedom of the city along with a grant of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

His country, however, had not delayed until then to express its appreciation of his work. Honors had been showered upon him. He was created a Baron in 1892 and Viscount in 1898, choosing his title from his birthplace Cromer Hall, Norfolk. He received

the coveted Order of Merit as well as the Albert Medal. The initials, clustering thick after his name in Burke, announce that he was a member of the Privy Council, a Grand Cross of the Bath, a Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George, a Knight Commander of the Star of India, a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire, a Doctor of Civil Laws of Oxford and of Laws from Cambridge, and several other things. At the bottom of the "Who's Who" paragraph, one learns that he belonged to the five most exclusive clubs in London: The Turf, the Travelers, the Marlborough, the St. James, and Brooks.

During the past few years Earl Cromer appeared often in the Upper House, spoke brilliantly on various proposed pieces of legislation, and took some part in politics and society, but his keen enjoyment lay in the seclusion of his library. Here it was that he composed four books since 1909, the most important being of course the monumental *Modern Egypt*. Here it was that one loved to meet him and listen, when he was in humor to talk, to conversation delightful in matter, rich in quotation and historical references, pointed by shrewdest criticism of men and things. As this great proconsul sat there, conscious surely of a life's work well accomplished, and, as the chimes of Time's mighty cathedral sounded out in clear and mellow cadences the story of seventy-five great years, the sunlight, laying around that white head, seemed to rest there in a halo of benediction,—a blessing on one who, in his empire building, had done so much to advance the brotherhood of man.

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